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AUTHOR Smith, Gary R.
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ABSTRACT

To identify the procedures for selecting documents for inclusion in the Resources in Education (RIE) portion of the ERIC database, the directors of each of the ERIC system's 16 clearinghouses were contacted and asked the following questions: What is the acceptance rate of unsolicited manuscripts submitted to your clearinghouse for possible publication? What are the academic credentials and experience of those who evaluate unsolicited manuscripts? and What criteria are used to evaluate the quality of unsolicited manuscripts? Their replies indicate that: (1) each clearinghouse uses the services of professional experts with advanced degrees and experience in the particular areas of education which it is responsible for covering to review the manuscripts it receives; (2) reviewers follow an explicit and impressive set of criteria to decide which documents to include in the database; (3) the impressive dissemination system of the ERIC database includes microfilming the entire document, abstracts printed in a monthly periodical, the capability for Boolean searches of the database through online and CD-ROM systems, and depositories of the microfiche collection throughout the United States and several other nations; and (4) the ERIC system has demonstrated a commitment to provide useful information to the professional educator in colleges and universities, as well as to the teacher, administrator, and other practitioners in the K-12 school systems. The contribution of faculty from several universities to RIE is analyzed and it is concluded that Wayne State College faculty have not contributed their fair share of writing and scholarship to the ERIC database. (SD)

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SURVEY OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE REPORTED

IN THE *RESOURCES IN EDUCATION (RIE)*

COMPONENT OF ERIC DATA BASE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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ED327183

BY

GARY R. SMITH, PROFESSOR

TEACHER EDUCATION DIVISION

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

January 31, 1990

(Survey conducted for College of Education Personnel Committee, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan)

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During the past decade, Wayne State University has emphasized the necessity for its faculty to generate and report new knowledge through books, journals, professional meetings, speeches, artistic shows and other scholarly vehicles of dissemination. It should be recognized that each professor has the primary responsibility for reporting accurately what has been attempted in the scholarly enterprise and the extent to which new information has been produced. His/her professional reputation may be increased or diminished by the accuracy and candor of that report.

Alexander Kohn (1) has described the folly of some scholars who rushed to publish their ideas with scant regard for the risk to their reputations. Recent issues of *Science* (2,3,4) have described instances of falsification of scholarly papers reviewed by peers and subsequently published in major professional publications, e.g., *Cell, New England Journal of Medicine.*

These few instances illustrate the importance of the integrity of the faculty member who conducts scholarly research and they also indicate the unfortunate consequences which may befall the individual and the institution when lapses of professional ethics do occur.

It is clear that the University wants to promote faculty who are productive scholars, reward merit with increased pay, and retain valuable teacher/scholars with tenured appointments. In the College of Education, we accept and apply the conventional criteria and data collection procedures to confirm the scholarly productivity of our faculty. However, as new media have emerged in electronic information processing, we believe that we should acknowledge and utilize these new tools of our information society.

While faculty in each discipline must define the proper role of the electronic data bases, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is the premier information system for collecting and disseminating new knowledge in professional education. *Resources in Education (RIE)* is a subset of documents within the ERIC database. It contains on microfilm the **entire** contents of research reports, speeches, proceedings of professional associations, conference reports, reports from state departments of education, school curriculum

initiatives, and other fugitive documents which are generally absent from terse journal articles or specialized books.

When a document is submitted to ERIC, it is transmitted to one of the 16 ERIC Clearinghouses which specialize in collection and review of scholarly efforts of professional educators in higher education and in K-12 school systems. Table 1 provides a listing of the 16 ERIC Clearinghouses, their institutional affiliation, and their special fields of interest. Each Clearinghouse follows a screening procedure to decide whether or not to include a document in the ERIC database, and we have described this screening process in a later section of this paper.

If a document satisfies the selection criteria of the Clearinghouse, the full report of text, tables, illustrations, and appendices is placed onto microfilm and disseminated to more than 700 ERIC microfiche depositories throughout the United States and 22 other nations. An abstract of the report with identifiers and descriptors is published with other information in the monthly periodical, *Resources in Education*.. Furthermore, an abstract of 200 words is written for each accepted document and this set of RIE abstracts is collected onto CD-ROM discs for search and retrieval of information by faculty and students in various education fields. The collection of more than 300,000 *RIE* documents includes documents from 1965 through 1989.

The ERIC data base also includes a collection of citations of journal articles selected from more than 700 education journals published from 1969 through 1989. This second component of the ERIC data base is similar to the collection of abstracts in medicine established by *MEDLINE* or the data base index to articles in social science, politics, economics, and psychology represented by the *Social Science Index* or *Psychlit*.

Procedure

In order to verify our impressions of the procedures for selecting documents to be included in the RIE portion of the ERIC data base, we wrote to the Directors of each of the 16 Clearinghouses which are listed in Table 1. We asked three questions which were posed in an earlier study by Mary Sellen and Robert Tauber (5), i.e.,

1. What is the acceptance rate of unsolicited manuscripts (documents, etc.) submitted to your Clearinghouse for possible publication?

2. What are the academic credentials and experiences of those who evaluate unsolicited manuscripts (documents, etc.)?

3. What criteria are used to evaluate the quality of unsolicited manuscripts (documents, etc.)?

If we did not receive a written reply from the Clearinghouse Director within 30 days, we attempted to obtain answers to the three questions through telephone interviews with the Director or Associate Director of the Clearinghouse. We received written responses from the Directors of 11 Clearinghouses and collected answers to the questions through telephone interviews with the other five Directors of Clearinghouses.

In order to obtain some estimate of the participation of other prominent universities and agencies in ERIC, we reviewed the last annual listing of contributors to *RIE* (6). We counted the number of papers and other documents submitted to *RIE* by scholars at the University of Michigan, MIchigan State University, National Science Foundation, University of Illinois (Urbana), Rand Corporation, Syracuse University, and Wayne State University.

Criteria Used to Evaluate Documents

ERIC publishes a manual (7) which describes the guidelines to be followed by the staff of each Clearinghouse in reaching a decision to accept or reject a document which has been received. We have included a copy of the *ERIC Processing Manual* in Appendix A. Staff members at each Clearinghouse use the criteria specified in the *Manual* to guide their selection process, and they emphasize appraisal of the quality of the document being evaluated. The *Manual* provides definitions of criteria and detailed information to guide interpretation of the expectation of quality documents to include in the data base.

> Quality is the single most important selection criterion. Quality is a composite factor made up of several more specific characteristics, e.g., contribution to knowledge, significance, relevance, newness/innovativeness, effectiveness and thoroughness of presentation, timeliness, authority of author. . .(8)

Specialists at each Clearinghouse utilize their special knowledge of past and current research and scholarship in the field to place each submitted document into perspective as a valuable contribution or something less than that. Written responses and statements made during telephone interviews indicated that the reviewers are disposed to accept documents which: 1) are directly related to the mission of their Clearinghouse, 2) are clearly written, 3) explore new initiatives in the area, and 4) establish relationships to ideas produced by previous research.

It is important to recognize that most of the ERIC Clearinghouses have two constitutencies -- professional educators in colleges or universities, and professional educators who are teachers, administrators, counselors, and other practitioners. Documents which are helpful to one group do not necessarily meet the needs or criteria of members of the other group. Respondents to our survey stated that they strive to build a data base which is valuable to one or both groups.

Acceptance of Documents in RIE

The respondents to our survey stated that they maintain annual records of the number of documents received at the Clearinghouse and the number rejected. Ordinarily, they do not distinguish between solicited and unsolicited documents. Although the percent accepted will change from one year to the next, the percent of accepted documents shown in Table 2 is a fair estimate for each Clearinghouse. The range of acceptance extends from 25% of the documents received to 82% of the documents received.

One should be cautious in drawing inferences from the data in Table 2. One respondent indicated that their high rate of acceptance was largely influenced by the fact that they tried very hard to communicate to their users the type and quality of documents which they would accept and what they would reject. Another respondent emphasized a close working relationship with the learned society which was closely allied to the goals of the Clearinghouse.

In any event, it is clear that documents are juried and the decision to include them in the data base in affirmed only after a careful reading and evaluation of the document has been completed.

Qualifications of RIE Reviewers

When a document is received by a Clearinghouse, there is an initial screening to determine if it has been sent to the appropriate group who will be qualified to review and evaluate the document. When it has arrived at the appropriate site, it is reviewed by one or more members of the Clearinghouse staff. Table 3 provides a general indication of the qualifications of personnel in each Clearinghouse. The numbers refer to one or more of the qualifications listed in the Legend which accompanies the table.

The Legend in Table 3 represents an attempt to classify narrative information which was contained in the written responses and telephone interviews. The six items in the Legend were not presented directly as

part of a question; and, therefore, some opportunities for error were introduced.

However, inspection of information in Table 3 indicates that all reviewers in all Clearinghouses have teaching or administrative experience directly related to the special field of the Clearinghouse. All reviewers at all Clearinghouses have a master's degree or higher degree in the special field. With one exception, the Director of each Clearinghouse has a doctorate in the special field. Respondents indicated that the Director also reviewed documents -- sometimes, the Director was the only reviewer of documents. Frequently, the Director and other Clearinghouse members served as regular members of editorial review boards for journals in their special fields. Often faculty members at the institution were asked to review documents which were submitted to the Clearinghouse.

Faculty Contributions to RIE

A review of abstracts recently published in Resources in Education (RIE) suggests the extent to which faculty of major universities and members of other prominent agencies are participating through contributions of their writing. Table 4 provides a selected listing of institutions and their contributions for 1988. The Annual Cumulative Index (9) listed a great many of the prominent universities and public agencies where high levels of scholarship in education is flourishing in the United States and abroad. Table 4 is merely indicative of the relatively small degree of participation of our faculty in submitting their ideas and scholarly products to be reviewed by a a larger audience of colleagues.

Conclusions

Information collected in this brief study leads us to conclude that the document review process for the Resources in Education (RIE) component of ERIC will use the following resources:

1. an established collection of 16 Clearinghouses with professional personnel who possess advanced degrees and experience in special fields of education;

2. an explicit and impressive set of criteria to decide which documents should be added to the data base;

3. an impressive dissemination system including microfilming the total document, abstracts printed in a monthly periodical, Boolean searches of the data base on-line or using CD-ROM, and depositories throughout the United States and several other nations;

4. a commitment to provide useful information to the professional educator in colleges or universities and to the teacher, administrator, and other practitioners in the K-12 school systems.

Finally, we conclude that our colleagues in the Wayne State College of Education have apparently not contributed their fair share of writing and scholarship to the Resources in Education (RIE) data base.

With respect to scholarly effort and research, we believe that there is a reasonable balance which our faculty can achieve through speeches at professional meetings, writing for professional journals, conducting workshops with school personnel, guiding scholarly research of their students, and contributing their ideas and writing to the Resources in Education (RIE) data base. It is this last item which needs to be recognized, encouraged, and increased.

Table 1 ERIC Clearinghouses Contacted Regarding Selection of Documents for RIE Collection

Clearinghouse	Institution
1. Adult, Career & Vocational Education	Ohio State Univ.
2. Counseling & Personnel Services	U. of Michigan
3. Educational Management	U. of Oregon
4. Elementary & Early Childhood Education	U. of Illinois
5. Handicapped & Gifted Children	Council for Except. Children
6. Higher Education	G.Washington U.
7. Information Resources	Syracuse U.
8. Junior Colleges	UCLA
9. Languages & Linguistics	Center for Appl. Linguist.
10. Reading & Communication Skills	Indiana U.
11. Rural Education & Small Schools	Appalachia Educ. Lab.
12. Science, Mathematics, & Environmental Ed.	Ohio State U.
13. Social Studies/Social Science Education	Indiana U.
14. Teacher Education	AACTE
15. Tests, Measurement, & Evaluation	American Institute for Research
16. Urban Education	Columbia U.

Table 2 Acceptance Rate of Documents Submitted to ERIC Clearinghouses for Review

Clearinghouse	Acceptance Rate
1. Adult, Career & Vocational Education	70%
2. Counseling & Personnel Services	70% to 75%
3. Educational Management	55% to 60%
4. Elementary & Early Childhood Education	79%
5. Handicapped & Gifted Children	53%
6. Higher Education	75%
7. Information Resources	25%
8. Junior Colleges	50%
9. Languages & Linguistics	82%
10. Reading & Communication Skills	67% to 75%
11. Rural Education & Small Schools	60%
12. Science, Mathematics, & Environmental Ed.	55% to 60%
13. Social Studies/Social Science Education	75%
14. Teacher Education	70%
15. Tests, Measurement, & Evaluation	75%
16. Urban Education	60%

Table 3 Academic Credentials and Professional Experience of Persons Who Review ERIC Clearinghouse Documents

Clearinghouse	Legend Number
1. Adult, Career & Vocational Education	1, 2, 3, 4
2. Counseling & Personnel Services	1, 2, 4
3. Educational Management	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
4. Elementary & Early Childhood Education	1, 2, 4
5. Handicapped & Gifted Children	1, 2, 4,
6. Higher Education	1, 2, 3, 4,
7. Information Resources	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
8. Junior Colleges	1, 2, 3, 4
9. Languages & Linguistics	1, 2, 4,
10. Reading & Communication Skills	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
11. Rural Education & Small Schools	2,4, 5
12. Science, Mathematics, & Environmental Ed.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
13. Social Studies/Social Science Education	1, 2, 4, 6
14. Teacher Education	1, 2, 3, 4
15. Tests, Measurement, & Evaluation	1, 2, 3, 4
16. Urban Education	1, 2, 4

Legend:

1. Director has doctorate and professional experience in field served by Clearinghouse.
2. All reviewers have teaching or administrative experience in field served by Clearinghouse.
3. All reviewers have doctorate in field served by Clearinghouse.
4. All reviewers have Masters degree or higher degree in field served by Clearinghouse.
5. Director or other staff served on editorial board(s) of 1 or more professional journals.
6. Some of the reviewers are also faculty members at university where Clearinghouse is located.

Table 4 Number of Documents Submitted by Faculty and Representatives of Selected Universities or Agencies and Included in *Resources in Education (RIE)* During 1988

Institution or Agency	Number of Documents
University of Illinois (Urbana)	50
Michigan State University	28
University of Michigan (Ann Arbor)	13
National Science Foundation	116
Rand Corporation (Santa Monica)	16
Research For Better Schools (Philadelphia)	23
Syracuse University	28
Wayne State University	1

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6. *Annual Cumulation 1988:Index, Resources in Education (RIE)* , Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1989.

7. *ERIC Processing Manual - Section 3 : Selection,* Educational Resources Information Center U.S. Department of Education, October 1980, 33 pages.

8. *ibid.*, p.iii

9. *ibid.*

APPENDIX A

PROCESSING MANUAL

Rules and Guidelines for the Acquisition, Selection, and Technical Processing of Documents and Journal Articles by the Various Components of the ERIC Network

SECTION 3: SELECTION

October 1980

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER

National Institute of Education
U.S. Department of Education

APPENDIX B

Excerpt of memo from Wayne State University Dean of the Graduate School to the Dean of the College of Education (6-8-90)

"The Credentials Committee has reviewed the revised Graduate Faculty Criteria Statement submitted by the College of Education (with respect to) . . . acceptance of documents listed in Resources in Education (RIE) as evidence of peer-reviewed scholarly achievement. The Committee believes that, although submissions to RIE undergo a selection process, that process does not appear to be uniformly stringent, as evidenced by the widely varying acceptance rates of 25% to 82%, even when approached with the cautions Dr. Smith indicates in his survey. (Gary R. Smith, Survey of Research Literature Reported in the Resources in Education Component of the ERIC Data Base, Table 2, page 10.) In addition, because of its broad-ranging purpose and its several constituencies, the types of materials RIE selects may not necessarily be a suitable indicator of the scholarly activity required of Graduate Faculty members. The Committee thus cannot accept RIE inclusion as the equivalent of peer reviewed scholarly publication."